

# **DRAFT Rapid Transit Steering Committee Meeting Minutes**

## **EOB Auditorium**

**April 29, 2015 4:00 – 6:00 pm**

### **Voting Members In-Attendance**

Sean Egan; Andrew Gunning; Jonathan Parker; Al Roshdieh; John Schlichting; Dan Wilhelm; Mark Winston.

### **Non-Voting Members**

Joe Beach; Joana Conklin; Gary Erenrich; Brady Goldsmith; Barry Kiedrowski; Rick Kiegel; Stacy Leach; Tom Pogue; Frank Spielberg; Tom Street; Emil Wolanin.

### **Other Attendees**

Celesta Jurkovich; Rafael Olarte; Harriet Quinn; Geri Rosenberg; Phil Shapiro; Matt Tingstrom.

### **Introductions and Welcome**

Al Roshdieh started the meeting at 4:03 pm. The meeting started with all attendees introducing themselves.

### **Approval of Minutes for March 25, 2015.**

Joana Conklin explained that more details needed to be added to the March meeting summary at the request of certain members after they had reviewed the initial draft. She said a more extensive version will be prepared shortly for the members to review.

### **Rockville Town Center BRT Study Scope and Schedule**

Andrew Gunning, member and staff for the City of Rockville, gave the presentation, which can be found on the RTS website. The purpose of the study is to make sure the BRT plans follow the Rockville Town Center Master Plan. The study has identified several issues that are important to Rockville residents. The presentation contained photos and maps showing the area of concern with regards to traffic. The City of Rockville is trying to come up with ideas for dedicated BRT lanes within or along their roadways which are already congested. The City engaged the firm ERM, who works with another consulting firm, Sabra Wang, to run the study and design. The study started in March. There was a technical workshop being held in May with the partners. Preliminary design concepts will be given to the Mayor and the City Council in the summer and the study will be concluded in the fall. Andrew said that so far this has been really challenging because the MD 355 and MD 586 BRT routes are being planned in a constrained area.

Gary Erenrich thanked the City of Rockville for doing this study and apologized for not making their technical meeting held earlier.

## **Gaithersburg BRT Study Scope and Schedule**

John Schlichting, member and staff for the City of Gaithersburg, gave this presentation, which can also be found on the RTS website. Gaithersburg is undertaking a study that is generally similar to the scope of the study being done by the City of Rockville. There was \$120,000 placed in the CIP by the Mayor and City Council to work on the MD 355 area. The decision was made to use the funds to learn how BRT will affect this area of Gaithersburg. There are no Metrorail stations, but there are two MARC train stations, which run in one direction in the morning and the opposite direction in the evening. Gaithersburg wants to work together with the County and State to accommodate BRT in the corridor. The study began in April and is looking at a four mile stretch on MD 355. The Kickoff Meeting was held April 1, with deliverable dues in May, June, and July, and the final document to be presented to the Mayor and City Council in August, 2015.

The following questions from the members were fielded by both Andrew and John.

Q) How does your study coordinate with the efforts going on with our partners in the State? Are your consultants willing to work with them?

A) John: Intend to keep the State and County in the loop. Rockville will be doing the same.

Q) Are you looking into fixing the egress with the Rockville Metro Station?

A) Yes, Rockville is working with METRO on that.

Q) Are you looking into pedestrian access as part of the study?

A) Yes. Current system probably won't work once the BRT buses start running.

Q) These studies – are you trying to come out with a locally preferred alternative for the cross sections?

A) Yes, that's a good way to explain it. The study will feed into the State's process, but not take away any of the items the State needs to complete.

Q) There was a lot of discussion last meeting about the BRT stations and consistency throughout the RTS system. How would that apply within the city boundaries – are you looking for distinctive stations?

A) Haven't addressed that yet and not planning to go into that level on the study, but would like to keep in line with the rest of the system.

Q) From what I understand, Rockville's study is looking at how to accommodate the BRT whereas Gaithersburg is more of the mindset that BRT is coming, what do we do to allow for BRT?

A) It is kind of both.

Q) How does this relate to your master plan work?

A) We don't know if it will trigger an update to the Rockville Town Center Master Plan. We should know by the fall. Gaithersburg said developing the BRT will fall within their master plan.

The comment was made that this is a network, and we can't have one station looking different from the others. We need to work with the CCT because these will be the first stations up and running. Al Roshdieh said that certain consistent design themes will be important to establish an identity for the RTS system within the county. Another member commented that it's not just the look, but things like curb height are important to be consistent so the BRT vehicles can be accommodated at any station.

Q) Did anything happen with MTA on the CCT design based off last month's discussion?

A) Rick Kiegel and Gary Erenrich have been working together regarding the station design. They looked at the two "sidewalk" stations, which will probably be the most comparable to stations in the rest of the system. They are simpler and cheaper than the other types of stations, but possibly more than what the County wants to pay. We are using the station at the Universities at Shady Gove as the model. Very high quality, good design, artistic, but affordable if you have 150 stations. We want quality stations. There will probably be several different designs used for the BRT but with a common theme.

Part of BRT's image is that you have stations as opposed to bus stops, so you need the ticketing, power, lights, seating, etc., all of which come at a cost. Drainage issues also become expensive. The shelters aren't the costliest part of the expense.

Hot Spots in the county – Wheaton and Rockville stations currently serving rail and bus patrons have the most delays. There are 100 buses per hour arriving and departing from both stations, causing the delays and making it difficult to plan around when it comes to integrating BRT service into them.

### **Transit Task Force Activities**

A few weeks ago the County Executive announced the reinstitution of the Transit Task Force. Mark Winston is the chair. The first meeting was held last Wednesday (April 22) and meetings will be held through September 30, which is when the County Executive would like a report. There are also two working groups – one for finance and one for operations. Mark said the main topic is how to best organize ourselves and pay for the development of the BRT system. Those are the basic questions the Task Force members are trying to address. The goal of the Task Force is to understand the issues that the County faces (constraints using existing structures and finances) and to look at the proposed legislation [the legislation the County Executive put forth to create an Independent Transit Authority] as a starting point and to use it to look into other options. We need to improve what was proposed or to look at why it wasn't initially accepted,

said Mark. The meetings will be held mostly in the working groups, and once the ideas are fully formed, they will take the ideas to the main Task Force for review and discussion. There will be two public forums, and all task force meetings are open to the public. The public will be given a chance to express their concerns prior to the report being presented to the County Executive. They are starting out with creating a context for the public to understand why the County Executive made the decisions he did.

### **Project Updates: Purple Line, Corridor Cities Transitway, BRT Studies**

Joana Conklin reported that there was not much of an update on the Purple Line. We are still waiting for the Secretary to do his review. By the middle to end of May we should have his report. Rick Kiegel reported there was a change to the CCT's planning schedule. The Environmental Assessment Document was submitted in February and we still have not received a response from the Federal Transit Administration. This is pushing back the public hearing to present this document from June to September. The 30% design completion is now scheduled for October. We will then try to complete the final Environment Assessment Document by the end of the year.

Q) Federal Transportation Administration's New Start process – do you envision the CCT being rated this time around and do you plan to submit enough documentation to get a rating for the CCT?

A) Answer to both is very likely no. If the Purple and Red Line do go ahead as planned, the State of Maryland would have two out of five projects in the New Start Program. If one of those doesn't go ahead as planned, then we will reconsider the CCT going forward with the rating. We have no scope that has us preparing New Starts documentation. If there was a priority, we have the necessary material and are keeping it eligible. Once we determine we want to pursue it, it would take about three months to submit the documents.

Q) Are there things you are doing now to stay eligible for the New Starts funds that you would not be doing if you weren't going for it?

A) Yes, the NEPA process. If we weren't going for the New Starts funds, we would still need to follow Maryland's environment requirements. When you only do the state studies, you are a bit more autonomous. You can police yourself whereas the Federal level must have more details.

Q) What is your best guess on the time difference?

A) Probably save 25% of your time if you went State instead of Federal.

Q) We'll be at 30% design at the end of October and that is a decision point. What is going to happen since there are no funds?

A) That will be determined. Right now we are moving into a traditional final design evaluation to the point where we move into the bid process. Over the fall we will look if that is the path to follow or to look into other options, such as a P3 [a public-private partnership]. All have different implications going forward.

Q) The current funding allocation – will that just take you through the 30% design?

A) No. The only part not covered is the construction funding. There are sufficient funds to get through the preliminary design phase, final design, and right of way acquisition – the next three years. Construction would take about three years. That is the \$100 million, some of which has been spent, not counting the \$145 million (balance to complete).

Q) One final thought – three years for completion of design, another three years for actual construction. If you had all the dollars for both phases, would it shorten the complete time?

A) Not the way it is. You could possibly take it down to four years.

Q) The process you are looking at this fall, how much of that thinking you are going to do will apply to BRT, not CCT?

A) The work will not apply to the BRT project overall. Analysis will be just to CCT, but it could be applied to BRT by subsequent studies and engineering work.

Q) Leaving aside there are differences between the CCT and the remaining lines, in your mind, shouldn't the thought process about the structuring and the procurement of financing be coordinated between the two elements? Would you consider over the summer, that we see a relationship between the design of the CCT and the BRT?

A) We should start looking at the two efforts similarly, but the CCT is being sponsored and led by the State while the BRT is very heavily sponsored by the County, who will be making those decisions.

One of the members said that many of us look at the CCT and BRT as a single system.

BRT studies are continuing. We are just finished the second round of the CAC meetings – more process oriented. The next meetings will be more technical and will be held toward the end of May, leading to the public meetings at the end of June. Next month we should have deliverables including traffic and ridership data.

Q) How many CAC meetings are you committed to?

A) As many as it takes.

Q) General structures – what type of feedback are you looking for at the upcoming public workshops?

A) The setup is the same as any SHA project. The County and State are working together to set goals and values to bring to the public. The public workshop will bring traffic data, purpose and need data, and we will allow people to walk through at their own pace. We hope Rockville and Gaithersburg will be there as well.

Q) Why are you having them at the end of June? Not the best time to have a public workshop – can you push it to the fall?

A) We don't want to go into July and August, but it is important to get this meeting in as soon as possible.

Q) What's the thinking of the other public workshops?

A) There will be a second public workshop in 2016 (spring timeframe).

Q) Is it typical for SHA to hold these meetings through June?

A) Yes, we have found we are still able to get a good response in June. We are looking at the week of June 15 and 22. If you are on vacation one week, you should be able to make the next one, since the information is that same at both meetings.

There was a discussion about the plans to have these public meetings in June. A guest commented that most people go on vacation right after school is out. Several people provided their feedback about this subject matter, and SHA has offered to look at some other possible dates and to see what would happen if the meetings are pushed back to the fall.

Q) Could the CACs use more time to review the technical information? The lead time seems too compressed.

A) We don't want to go backwards on our process. We don't want this to affect our overall time frame for the project.

Q) Will the material be available on-line?

A) Yes, all materials will be on-line. There is no closed comment time frame. SHA is willing to come out to speak to communities, HOAs, etc. There are a lot of moving parts and there are plenty of opportunities for feedback, plus there will be a mailing with the information to residents along the two corridors having public workshops [MD 355 and US 29].

Q) On the other workshops there was a much larger lead time than six months. This process sounds a lot different from the CCT.

A) More like ten to twelve months between workshops, not six. It is a different process. MD 586 was a full NEPA study. You really can't compare the two studies.

Q) Why isn't it getting the same level of studies, like CCT or MD 586 [???]? The differences in time and money spent are concerning people

A) MD 586 and the CCT followed NEPA, these studies are not yet in the NEPA process, but will be if it is determined that Federal funding may be pursued.

In order to move on to the remaining topics, Al Roshdieh stated we would discuss the schedule at the next meeting. He also said the County will look into pushing the workshops back to the fall, and to come up with a better schedule, but only if this can be done without pushing back the projects' current schedule for completion by the spring/summer, 2016.

We need to be able to see the bigger picture, not just a small piece of the picture. Trying to figure out the best way to present these planning efforts – similar to Rick Kiegel, who was very

clear where he is on his schedule. Need to come up with common terminology, make sure we are saying the same thing.

### **Discussion of Future Meeting Topics and Schedule**

At the last meeting we ran out of time to discuss this topic. A document with ideas for future meeting topics was presented to the committee. Some thought that came out of this discussion:

- It would be great if the Steering Committee would start looking at branding and marketing, looking at it in terms of the five corridors and the CCT – how do we want to brand this system. It would be good to get started on it. The second thing is we need to come back to the subject of what does the Ride On system look like as RTS comes on-line. It would be useful to start thinking about it now, and it might get people to look into the impact of ridership on Ride On. The sub-question on stations design – there should be some discussion by the committee on the types of stations.
- Look at the bus types and work more with Rick Kiegel's group, getting some architects to help with station designs that are effective and cost efficient.
- Rick Kiegel is setting the standard for the system and we need to work more with him.
- Look at how the local circulator bus lines tie in with the redesign of Ride On.

The other issue is the frequency of these meetings. Some months we have struggled to come up with topics and the meetings have ended early. Do we need to maintain these monthly meetings or should we go bi-monthly since the studies are drawn out?

- It might be better to decrease these meetings due to the frequency of the Task Force meetings.
- Base them off need; leave the meetings on the calendar, and decide by the topics at hand whether or not a particular scheduled meeting is necessary or could be cancelled for that month.
- Don't see a need to just have a meeting; just hold one if we have the topics to do so. We need to make sure there is material to present.

Q) Are the CACs being asked to give their thoughts on, for example, Ride On with regards to their communities or other needs? There seems to be no way for CACs to give reports, based off their meetings.

A) We did include the meeting minutes from the CAC meetings in the last packet. We need to have the facilitators give presentations to the Steering Committee about what is happening during their meetings. Perhaps have Andrew Bing, the lead facilitator, come in at the start and if the CACs have a hot topic to discuss, then have the individual facilitators come in. We've gone through a few exercises with the CACs and are finding themes – pedestrian safety, current transportation needs, etc.

Q) How does the Steering Committee come to consensus and how does it get filtered back to the County Executive?

A) This body needs to come up with a consensus (say station design) or develop questions for partners to handle by having them come in and present. This group functions to assist with the implementation of RTS. We want to make sure the Steering Committee feels like something came out of the meetings. Previously we had a lot of conversations about the CACs, for example; your comments were in turn used to set up and select the CAC members.

Q) Is there anything on this list we should cross off?

A) Not sure we all need tours.

Rick Kiegel suggested if you can find some time, check out the Route 1 Alexandria BRT that is currently running. You can also see a lot of the same design elements for the stations. The City of Rockville has plans to go to Alexandria to look at the BRT on Friday, May 1.

### **Meeting Calendar**

The next meeting is scheduled for May 27, 2015 in the EOB Auditorium at 4:00 pm.

Al Roshdieh ended the meeting at 5:47 pm.